



## Concept of Agni and its physiological aspects

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### ABSTRACT

*Ayurveda* is the ancient Indian system of life. *Ayurveda* has described *Agni* as an important factor of digestion and metabolism in our body. *Agni* determines the quantity of food to be consumed and it is responsible for longevity, health and strength. The term “*Agni*” is used for digestion of food and metabolism products. According to function and site of action *Agni*, it is classified as *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni*. *Acharya Charak* has mentioned that if the *Agni* of an individual is *Sama*, then that person would be absolutely healthy and would live a long, healthy and happy life. The diseased state of body is due to vitiation of *Agni*. So the concept of *Agni* becomes important to understand healthy and diseased state.

**Keywords** – *Agni*, Digestion, *Bhutagni*, *Dhatvagni*, *Jatharagni*.

### INTRODUCTION

According to *Ayurveda* *Agni* is very important entity for the maintenance of good health. *Ayurveda* says vitiation of *Agni* can cause disease. *Agni* is responsible for digestion and metabolism in *Ayurveda*. *Agni* converts food in the form of energy which is responsible for all vital functions of body. This *Agni* is not in the form of flame, it is in the form of liquid which is called as “*Pitta*” in *Ayurveda*. There is no *Agni* apart from *Pitta* and *Pitta* itself is *Agni* <sup>(1)</sup> *Agni* transforms complex molecules of food into simpler form by the effect of *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni*. Initially *Jatharagni* gives stimulation to transformation by the respective *Bhutagnis* then only it become easy for tissue metabolism by *Dhatvagnis*. With the help of *Vatadosha* the metabolism of products circulate inside the *Strotas* continuously. It

allows strength, development and growth of tissues. *Jathragni* is the main principal substance responsible for disease and health. Strength, health, complexion. Enthusiasm and other vital functions all are dependant on *Jatharagni*. Hence the health state of body and diseased state is entirely dependent on status of *Agni*<sup>(2)</sup>. Hence here is an attempt to study the importance of *Agni* and its physiological aspects.

### LITRETURE REVIEW –

The *Aahar* (food) ingested, is acted upon by the normal *Kosthagni* via *pachaka pitta* to produce the *Sarabhaga* or the *Ahara Rasa* (the essence of food) and *Kitta Bhaga* (the waste products of food). The *Sarabhaga* (*Ahara Rasa*) acted upon by *Bhutaganis* and undergoes further changes and gets converted into *Rasadhatu*- the first dhatu (first tissue) of the body. The activities of *Kosthagni* and *Bhutagnis* together forms the *Ahara Paka* which further form *Saptadhatu*. The *Rasadhatu* contains the nutrient materials derived from the food and this *Rasadhatu* circulates all over the body supplying the nutrients to all the other dhatus, which utilize this material for their growth (metabolism)<sup>(3)</sup>.

### Importance of *Agni*

The factors depends on *Agni* and its function are-

*Varna*(colour),  
*Bala*(strength)*Swasthya* (health), *Utsaha* (enthusiasm), *Upachaya* (development of the body), *Prabha* (complexion), *Ojas*

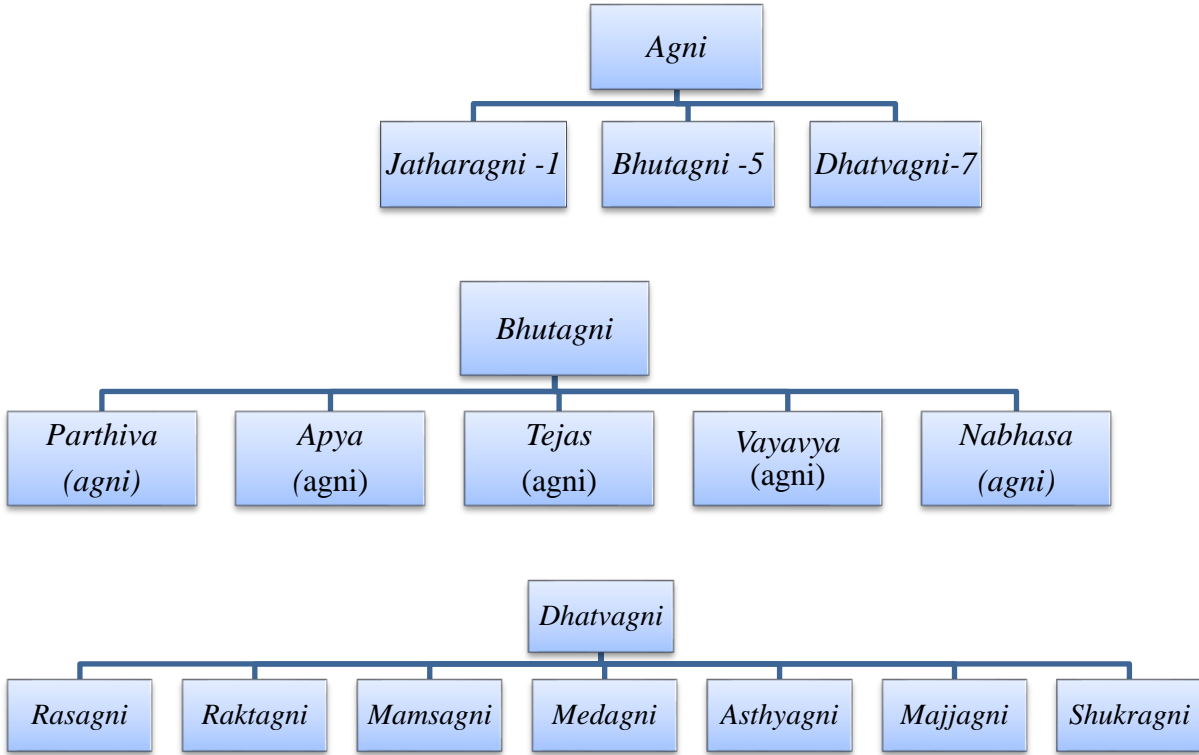
(strength)and even *Ayu* (life) depends on the normal function of *Agni*. If *Agni* is normal one can live healthy life otherwise loss of *Agni* leads to loss of life.<sup>(4)</sup>

### Concept of *Pitta* & *Agni* in Ayurveda

*Agnis* are of 13 in number (1- *Jatharagni* ,5-*Bhutagni* and 7- *Dhatvagni*), while five types of *Pitta* are there which undergoes *Pachana* in body.(*Ranjak Pitta*, *Pachak pitta*, *Alochak Pitta*, *Sadhak pitta*, *Bhrajak pitta*). *Aacharya Sushruta* has said that there is no separate *Agni* found other than *Pitta*. It is due to the properties of hotness in *Pitta* leading to burning cooking and such similar functions performed by *Pitta* are considered as *Agni* itself. Elements of fire and *Pitta* are comparative. *Agni* is available as *Pitta* in the body. No different *Agni* is seen in the body other than one or other type of *Pitta*. This shows that *Agni* and *Pitta* are same elements.

### Types of *Agnis*

In *Ayurveda Aacharya Charaka* has mentioned about 13 *Agnis*. *Jatharagni* –1, *Bhutagni* –5, *Dhatvagni* –7.<sup>(5)</sup> *Aacharya Sushruta* has described five types of *Agnis* that are *Pachakagni*, *Ranjakagni*, *Alochakagni*, *Sadhakagni* and *Bhrajakagni*.<sup>(6)</sup> *Aacharya Vagbhata* mentioned different types of *Agni*, *Audaryagni*-1, *Bhutagnis*-5<sup>(7)</sup>,*Dhatvagnis* – 7, *Dhoshagni* –3 and *Malagni*-3. <sup>(8)</sup> *Pitta* -5. *Sharangadhara* has recognized five *Pittas* only (*Pachak*, *Bhrajak*, *Ranjak*, *Alochaka* and *Sadhak*).<sup>(9)</sup>



### (a) *Jatharagni*

The *Agni* present in the *Jathara* (stomach and duodenum) is *Jatharagni*. According to *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Jatharagni* withholds the food for certain time inside *Aamashaya* for the digestion hence it called as seat of *Grahani*. According to *Dhanvantari*, it is the *Kala* known as “*Pittadhara kala*” situated at the entrance of the *Pakvashaya* (intestine) and acting as a bolt to the door of the channel of food. It is responsible for the duration of life, health, *Ojas* (essence of the dhatus), strength of all the *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni*. The strength of the *Grahani* is from *Agni* itself, and the strength of *Agni* is from *Grahani*.<sup>(10)</sup>

*Jatharagni* is considered to be the most important because every first nutrient that ingests first comes to the *Jathara* and is acted upon by the action of *Jatharagni*. *Jatharagni* digests the food materials that consist of the five basic elements and transforms it for utilization by the respective

*Dhatus* (tissues). It is also responsible for separation of the food material into the essence portion (*Prasad*) and the waste products (*Kitta*) in our body.<sup>(11)</sup>

*Jatharagni* is also classified into four categories that are *Vishmagagni*, *Tikshanagni*, *Mandagni* and *Samagni*, according to *Hareet Samhita*, *Samagni* depends on whether the *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*) are in normal stage.<sup>(12)</sup>

### (b) *Bhutagni*

The one that is present in a basic element (*Bhutas*) called as *Bhutagni*. There are five *Agnis* in each of the five basic elements which are – *Parthiva* (earth), *Apya* (water), *Tejas* (Agni), *Vayavya* (*Vayu*) and *Nabhasa* (*Akash*). Every cell in our body is made up of five *Mahabhutas* or five basic elements. Also each cell (*Dhatu paramanu*) consists of these five *Bhutagnis*. All the nutrients in this world that we eat also made up of the same five basic elements with their respective *Agni* or bioenergy. *Acharya*

*Charak* has stated that the five *Bhutagni* digest their own part of the element present in the food materials. After the digestion of food by the *Bhutagni*, digested materials containing the elements and qualities similar to each *Mahabhutas* nourish their own specific *Bhautika* elements of the body.<sup>(13)</sup>

These *Bhutagnis* act after the *Jatharagni* present in the stomach. In the modern physiological perspective, the action of *Jatharagni* can be equated with the digestion in the stomach and duodenum, and the action of the *Bhutagni* can be equated with the conversion of digested materials in the liver.

### (c) *Dhatvagni*

All the seven *Dhatus* (seven element tissues of the body) have their own *Agni* to metabolize the nutrient materials supplied to them through their own *Srotas*. All the seven *Dhatvagnis* present in all respective *Dhatu*.<sup>(14)</sup>

### Different States of *Agni*.<sup>(15-17)</sup>

#### (1) *Samagni*

It is not associated with dosha and it is called *Samagni* state and it is the physiological state of *Agni*. It assimilates food and digests food properly at the proper time. This thus increases the quality of the *Dhatus* (supportive tissues of the body). Persons having *Samagni* are always well and healthy.

#### (b) *Vishamagni*

*Vishamagni* is the state in which improper digestion and metabolism takes place. Sometimes performs normal functions followed by abnormal one and manifest flatulence, upward movement of *vata* inside the *kostha*, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, and heaviness in abdomen and straining exercise for evacuation of stools. When this *Agni* is

affected by the *Vata Dosha*, it creates different types of *Vatavyadhi*.

#### (c) *Tikshnagni*

*Tikshnagni* means very quick or very fast. *Tikshnagni* is a state of very quick digestion of food. *Acharya Shushrut* said that when the power of digestion is increased from normal to above, food digests very quickly and produces hunger or the desire for food. *Tikshnagni* state gives rise to manifestation of *Pittavyadhi*.

#### (d) *Mandagni*

The meaning of the *Mandagni* is slow digestive power or digestive capacity. Those having *Mandagni* eat very little and are unable to digest the smallest amount of food. *Dhanvantri* has mentioned that *Agni* digests the least amount of food in the greatest amount of time and manifest heaviness in abdomen and head, excessive salivation, vomiting, cough, dyspnea and weakness of the body. *Mandagni* state gives rise to manifestation of *kaphaja vikara*.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION-

After detailed discussion on *Agni* it can be concluded that *Agni* plays an important role in maintaining good health of human being. In clinical practice the treatment can be decided after *Agni Parikshan*. Diseased condition and healthy state of body completely depends on *Agni*. *Agni* acted as a fuel so it should be protected by proper intake of food. *Jatharagni* is important because it facilitates secretion of various enzymes and chemicals leads to proper digestion of food. *Dhatvagni* and *Bhutagni* is responsible for the digestion absorption and assimilation of food. *Agni* is essential for proper digestion and also it plays an important role in maintenance of overall health, digestive and excretory functions, and general enthusiasm for life. *Agni* apart from the digestive function, is

also responsible for the production of strength(*Bala*),colour(*Varna*),complexion(*Prabha*) and development of the body (*Upachaya*). According to *Ayurveda* disturb function of *Agni* is the cause of all diseases.

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